

OBSERVATIONS

On the Trafficking, importing and purchasing of

Negroes;

With some Advice thereon, extracted from the
Epistle of the Yearly-Meeting of the People called
QUAKERS, held at London in the Year 1748.

by
Anthony Benezet

*When ye spread forth your Hands, I will hide mine
Eyes from you, yea when ye make many Prayers I
will not hear; your Hands are full of Blood. Wash
ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings
from before mine Eyes* *Isai. 1, 15.*

*Is not this the Fast that I have chosen, to loose the
Bands of Wickedness, to undo the heavy Burden, so
let the Oppressed go free, and that ye break every
Yoke, Chap. 58, 7.*

Second Edition.

GERMANTOWN:

Printed by CHRISTOPHER SOWER. 1758.

INTRODUCTION.

CUSTOMS generally approved and Opinions received by Youth from their Superiors, become like the natural Produce of a Soil, especially when they are suited to favorite Inclinations: But as the Judgments of GOD are without Partiality, by which the State of the Soul must be tried, it would be the highest Wisdom to forego Customs and popular Opinions, and try our Deeds by the infallible Standard of Truth, even the pure Spirit of Grace which leads all those who in Sincerity obey its Dictates into a Conduct consistent with their Christian Profession.

— That important Injunction of our blessed Saviour, *Seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD and his Righteousness, and all Things shall be added unto you*, contains a short but comprehensive View of our Duty and Happiness. If then the Business of Mankind in this Life is, to first seek another; if this cannot be done, but by attending to the Means: If a Summary of the Means be, *To love the LORD our GOD with all our Heart and our Neighbour as our self: So as never to do to another, that, which in like Circumstances we would not have done to us*; then these are Points of Moment and worthy of our most serious Consideration.

094.1

1760

B435

382031

Li

In ancient Times it was the Practice of many Nations, when at war with each other, to sell the Prisoners they made in Battle, in order to defray the Expences of the War. This unchristian or rather inhuman practice, after many Ages continuance, is at length generally abolished by the Christian Powers of Europe, but still continues among some of the Nations of Asia and Africa, and to our sad Experience we find it also practised by the Natives of America. In the present war, how many of our poor Country Men are dragged to Bondage and sold for Slaves; how many mourn, a Husband, a Wife, a Child, a Parent or some near Relation taken from them; and were we to follow them a little farther, and see them exposed to sale and bought up to be made a Gain of, what Heart so hard that would not melt with Sympathy and Sorrow: And could we hear the Purchasers, for the sake of Gain, pushing on the Savages to captivate our People, what inhuman wretches should we call them, what Punishment should we think their Guilt deserved! But while our Hearts are affected for our Brethren and Relations, while we feel for our own Flesh and Blood, let us extend our Thoughts to others, and allow me, gentle Reader! to recommend to thy serious Consideration, a Practice that prevails among several Nations who call themselves Christians, and I am sorry to say it, in which we as a Nation are deeply engaged, and which is of such a Nature, as that nothing can be more inconsistent with the Doctrines and Practice of our meek Lord and Master, nor stained with a deeper Dye of Injustice, Cruelty and Oppression, I mean the *Slave Trade*, the purchasing and bringing the poor Negroes from their Native Land, and subjecting them to a State of perpetual Bondage, and that often the most cruel and oppressive. And this carried on chiefly at the instigation of those to whom the Promulgation of the merciful, pure, and holy

Gospel of Christ Jesus was committed. Will not the just Judge of all the Earth visit for all this? Or dare we say, that this very Practice is not one Cause of the Calamities we at present suffer; and that the Captivity of our People is not to teach us to feel for others, and to induce us to discourage a Trade, by which many Thousands are Yearly captivated? Evils do not arise out of the Dust, nor does the Almighty willingly afflict the Children of Men; but when a People offend as a Nation, or in a publick Capacity, the Justice of his moral Government requires that as a Nation they be punished, which is generally done by War, Famine or Pestilence. I know there are many Arguments offered in favour of the Purchasers, but they are all drawn from Avarice or ill founded, none will stand the Test of that divine Rule: *To do unto all Men, as we would they should do unto us.* Without Purchasers, there would be no Trade; and consequently every Purchaser as he encourages the Trade, becomes partaker in the Guilt of it; and that they may see what a deep dye the Guilt is of, I beg leave to quote some Extracts from the Writings of Persons of Note, who have been long employed in the African Trade, and whose Situation and Office in the Factories will not admit any to question the Truth of what they relate. By these we shall see, that in order to get Slaves, the Europeans settled at the Factories in Africa, encourage Wars, and promote the Practice of stealing Men, Women and Children, which they readily purchase without any Regard to Justice, Equity or any of the tender Ties of Nature.

William Bosman, Factor for the Dutch African Company, at the Factory at *Delmina*, who wrote an Account of that Country, now more than fifty Years past, tells his Readers ‘ That the Booty which the Negro Soldiers aim at in their Wars, are Ornaments of Gold and Prisoners of War, in Order to sell them for Slaves

' at Pleasure, that many of the Inhabitants depend on
 ' Plunder and the Slave-Trade; and that when Vessels
 ' arrive, if they have no Stock of Slaves, the Factors
 ' trust the Inhabitants with Goods for the Value of one
 ' or two Hundred Slaves, which they send into the in-
 ' land Country in Order to buy Slaves at all Markers,
 ' even sometimes two Hundred Miles deep in the Coun-
 ' try, where Markers of Men were kept in the same
 ' Manner as those of Beasts with us. He farther adds:
 ' That, in his Time, the Europeans furnished the Ne-
 ' groes with an incredible Quantity of Fire-Arms and
 ' Gunpowder, which was then the Chief vendible Mer-
 ' chandize there. This was the State of the Negro-
 ' Trade when *Bosman* wrote his Account of *Guinea*,
 which, as I have already said, was more than fifty Years
 ago; since that Time the Trade is prodigiously aug-
 mented, there being now more than ten Ships to one
 that was then employed in it; and as the Demand for
 Slaves has augmented, so have the Negroes been the
 more induced not only to wage War one with another,
 but also to put in practice the most base and inhuman
 Methods, in Order to get their unhappy Countrymen
 into their Power, that they may sell them to the Euro-
 pean Traders.

John Barbot, Agent General of the French Royal
 African Company, in his Acc. printed 1732 writes as
 follows: ' Those Slaves sold by the Negroes, are for
 ' the most Part Prisoners of War, taken either in fight
 ' or pursuit, or in the incursions they make into their
 ' Enemies Territories; others are stolen away by their
 ' own Country-Men, and some there are who will sell their
 ' own Children, Kindred or Neighbours. This has
 ' often been seen, and to compass it, they desire the
 ' Person they intend to sell, to help them in carrying some-
 ' thing to the Factory by Way of Trade, and when
 ' there, the Person so deluded, not understanding the
 ' Language

Language, is sold and delivered up as a Slave, notwithstanding all his Resistance and exclaiming against the Treachery. Abundance of little Blacks of both sexes are also stolen away by their Neighbours, when found abroad on the Roads, or in the Woods; or else in the Corn Fields, at the Time of the Year when their Parents keep them there all Day, to scare away the devouring small Birds,

A Person of Candour and undoubted Credit now living in *Philadelphia*, who was on a trading Voyage, on the Coast of *Guinea*, about seven Years ago, was an Eye-Witness of the Misery and Desolation which the Purchase of Slaves occasions in that Country, a particular Instance of which he relates in the following Manner viz.

Being on that Coast, at a Place called *Basalia*, the Commander of the Vessel according to Custom sent a Person on Shore, with a Present to the King of the Country, acquainting him with their arrival, and letting him know that they wanted a Cargo of Slaves: The King promised to furnish them with Slaves, and in Order to do it, set out to go to War against his Enemies, designing also to surprize some Town and take all the People Prisoners. Sometime after the King sent them Word he had not yet met with the desired success, having been twice repulsed, in attempting to break up two Towns; but that he still hoped to procure a Number of Slaves for them; and in this Design he persisted, till he met his Enemies in the Field, where a Battle was fought, which lasted three Days, during which Time the Engagement was so bloody, that 4500 were slain on the spot. Think, says the Author, what a pitiable sight it was, to see the Widows weeping over their lost Husbands, and Orphans deploring the loss of their Fathers &c., What must we think of that cruel Wretch who occasioned such a Scene of Misery, or what of those who for the sake of Gain instigated him to it.

N. N. *Brue*, a noted Traveller, a Narrative of whose Travels is to be met with in a new Collection of Voyages, printed by the King's Authority in the Year 1745, tells his Readers; 'That the Europeans are far from desiring to act as Peace-Makers, amongst the Negroes, which would be acting contrary to their Interest, since the greater the Wars, the more Slaves are procured. He also gives an Account of the Manner in which the Slaves are got, in the Place where he then was, in the following Term, viz. 'When a Vessel arrives, the King of the Country sends a Troop of Guards to some Village, which they surround; then seizing as many as they have Orders for, they bind them and send them away to the Ship, where the Ship's Mark being put upon them, they are hear'd of no more. They usually carry the Infants in Sacks, and gag the Men and Women for fear they should alarm the Villages, thro' which they are carried: For, says he, these Actions are never committed in the Villages near the Factories, which it is the King's Interest not to ruin, but in those up the Country.

Also, *Joseph Randal*, in his Book of Geography, printed in the Year 1744, in the Account he gives of the *Guinea Trade*, after generally confirming the above Account, adds: 'That in time of full Peace nothing is more common, than for the Negroes of one Nation to steal those of another, and sell them to the Europeans. There has, says he, been Instances amongst the Negroes of Children selling their Fathers and Mothers, when they have been weary of them, and wanted to enjoy what they had; which I suppose, says that Author, gave birth to the Laws, by which the Children are not to inherit the Goods or Estates of their Fathers Mothers. Thus, these poor Creatures are brought on to the Coast to be sold to the Merchants of Europe. When the Price is agreed upon, which for an

able bodied Man, under thirty five Years of age, may be about 5 Pounds, the Women a fifth Part less, and the Children in proportion to their Age, the Europeans Merchants brand them with hot Irons to distinguish them, and locks the poor wretches up in some Prison, till they can be sent on board; when they come to *America*, they are disposed of, some to the Spaniards to work in the Mines (for the English are obliged by the Assiento Contract, to deliver thirty Thousand Slaves every Year to the Spaniards, and the rest are sold to the Planters in *America*.) It is thought that the English transport annually near fifty Thousand of those unhappy Creatures, and the other European Nations together about Two Hundred Thousand more.

Let but any one reflect, that each Individual of this Number had some tender attachment which was brok'n by this cruel Separation; some Parent or Wife, who had not even the Opportunity of mingling Tears in a parting Embrace; or perhaps some Infant whom his Labour was to feed and Vigilance protect; or let any consider what it is to lose a Child, a Husband or any dear Relation, and then let them say what they must think of those who are engaged in, or encourage such a Trade. By the fore mentioned Accounts it appears, how by various perfidious, and cruel Methods, the unhappy Negroes are enslaved, and that mostly, by the Procurement of those called Christians, and violently rent from the tenderest Ties of Nature, to toil in hard Labour, often without sufficient Supplies of Food, and under hard Taskmasters, and this mostly to uphold the Luxury or Covetousness of proud selfish Men, without any Hope of ever seeing again their native Land; or an end to their Miseries. Oh ye cruel Taskmasters! Ye hard-hearted Oppressors, will not God hear their Cry? And what shall ye do, when God riseth up, and when he visiteth; what will ye answer him? *Did not he*
that

that made you, make them? and did not one fashion you in the Womb?

Hitherto I have considered the Trade as inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ, contrary to natural Justice, and the common feelings of Humanity, and productive of infinite Calamities to many Thousand Families, nay to many Nations, and consequently offensive to God the Father of all Mankind. Yet it must be allowed, there are some well minded Persons, into whose Hands some of the Negroes have fallen, either by Inheritance, Executorship, or even some perhaps purely from Charitable Motives, who rather desire to manage wisely for their good, than to make Gain by their Labour; these I truly sympathize with, for considering the general situation of those unhappy People, they have indeed a difficult Path to tread.

I might next consider the Trade as it is destructive of the Welfare of human Society, and inconsistent with the Peace and Prosperity of a Country, as by it the number of natural Enemies must be encreased, and the Place of those taken up who would be its support and security. Or I might shew from innumerable Examples, how it introduces Idleness, discourages Marriage, corrupts the Youth and ruins and debauches Morals. I might likewise expose the weakness of those Arguments, which are commonly advanced in Order to vindicate the Purchasers, such, as their being Slaves in their own Country, and therefore may be so to us, or that they are made acquainted with Christianity in lieu of their Liberty, or that the last Purchaser will use them better than they formerly were: But not to mention, that these are only vain pretences, that the true Morive of encouraging the Trade is selfish Avarice; to say nothing of the weakness of the Argument: That because others do ill, we may do so too; or the absurdity of recommending the Christian Religion by Injustice and disregard to the Rights

and Liberties of Mankind, or the Encouragement that every new Purchaser gives to a Trade altogether unjust and iniquitous. What is already said, will I hope be sufficient to prevent any considerate Christian from being, in any Degree, defiled with a Gain so full of Horrors, and so palpably inconsistent with the Gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which breaths nothing but Love and Good will to all Men of every Nation, Kindred, Tongue and People.

Under the Mosaic-Law Man-stealing was the only Theft punishable by Death: It is thus expressed in Exodus Chap. 21, 16. *He that stealeth a Man and selleth him, or if he be found in his Hand, he shall surely be put to death.*

Extract from the Epistle of the Yearly-Meeting of the People called QUAKERS, held at London in the Year 1758.

WE fervently warn all in profession with us, that they be careful to avoid being any Way concerned in reaping the unrighteous Profit arising from that iniquitous Practice of Dealing in Negroes and other Slaves; whereby in the original Purchase one Man selleth another, as he doth the Beasts that perish, without any better Pretension to a Property in him, than that of superior Force; in direct violation of the Gospel-Rule which teacheth every one to do as they would be done by, and to do Good unto All; being the Reverse of that covetous Disposition, which furnishes Encouragement to those ignorant People to perpetuate their
savages

savage Wars, in Order to supply the Demands of this most unnatural Traffick, whereby great Numbers of Mankind, free by Nature, are subjected to inextricable Bondage; and which hath often been observed, to fill their Possessors with Haughtiness, Tyranny, Luxury and Barbarity, corrupting the Minds, and debasing the Morals of their Children, to the unspeakable Prejudice of Religion and Virtue, and the Exclusion of that holy Spirit of universal Love, Meekness and Charity, which is the unchangeable Nature & the Glory of true Christianity. We therefore can do no less than, with the greatest Earnestness, to impress it upon Friends every where, that they endeavour to keep their Hands clear of this unrighteous Gain of Oppression.

THE
UNCERTAINTY
OF A
DEATH-BED
REPENTANCE,
Illustrated under the Character of
PENITENS.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him, while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God; for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55, 6.

PENITENS was a busy notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings, but died in the *thirty-fifth* year of his age.

A LITTLE before his death, when the doctors had given him over, some of his Neighbours came one evening to see him; at which time, he spake thus to them:

I SEE says he, my friends, the tender concern you have for me, by the grief that appears in your countenances, and I know the thoughts that you now have about me. You think how melancholy a case it is; to see so young a man, and in such flourishing business, deliver'd up to death. And perhaps, had I visited any of you in my condition, I should have had the same thoughts of you.

BUT now, my friends, my thoughts are no more like your thoughts, than my condition is like yours.

IT is no trouble to me now to think, that I am to die young, or before I have rais'd an estate,

THESE things are now sunk into such sheer *nothings*, that I have no name little enough to call them by. For if in a few days, or hours, I am to leave this carcase to be buried in the earth, and to ~~be~~ ^{be} either for ever happy in the favour of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace, can any words sufficiently express the littleness of every thing else?

Is there any dream like the dream of life, in which we are amused with vain and empty things? whilst we are neglecting and disregarding that which is substantially valuable. Is there any folly like the folly of most men and women, who think themselves too wise, and are too busy to hearken to the voice of Jesus Christ calling in the heart? which, if carefully attended to, would occasion these serious reflections; but for want of attending to this divine instructor, that enemy of mankind the Devil, is suffered to fill our minds with unreasonable affections and foolish opinions; so that when we consider death as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyments of this life. We seldom mourn over an old man that dies rich, but we lament the young, that are taken away in the progress of their fortune. You your selves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepar'd to meet the Judge of the quick and the dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life.

THIS is the wisdom of our manly thoughts. And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this?

FOR what is there miserable or dreadful in death, but the Consequences of it? When a man is dead, what does any thing signify to him, but the state he is then in?

OUR poor friend *Lepidus* dy'd, you know, as he was dressing himself for a *feast*; do you think it is now part of his trouble, that he did not live till that entertainment was over? *Feasts*, and *business*, and *pleasures*, and *enjoyments*, seem great things to us, whilst we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them, they all sink into an equal littleness; and the soul, that is separated from the body, no more laments the loss of *business*, than the losing of a *feast*.

IF I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve, that this happen'd to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven, before I had made a few more *bargains*, or stood a little longer behind a *counter*?

AND if I am to go amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content, that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of *riches*?

IF good Angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was dying upon a *poor bed* in a garret?

AND if GOD has deliver'd me up to evil spirits, to be dragg'd by them to places of torments, could it be any comfort to me, that they found me upon a *bed of state*?

WHEN you are as near death as I am, you will know, that all the different states of life, whether of youth or age, *riches* or *poverty*, *greatness* or *meanness*, signify no more to you, than whether you die in a *poor* or *stately* apartment.

THE

THE greatness of those things which follow death, makes all that goes before it, sink into *nothing*.

Now that *judgment* is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem as vain and insignificant, and to have no more to do with my happiness, than the cloaths that I wore before I could speak.

BUT, my friends, how am I surpriz'd, that I have not always had these thoughts? How am I surpriz'd to find, that for want of yielding obedience, to that degree of light and grace, with which God hath enlightned? the words of our blessed Saviour have been fulfilled in me, darkness has been suffered to come over me, and these great things have been hid from me; for what is there in the terrors of death, in the vanities of life, or the necessities of piety, but what I might have as easily and fully seen in any part of my life?

WHAT a strange thing is it, that a little *health*, or the poor business of a *shop*, should keep us so senseless of these great things, that are coming so fast upon us?

JUST as you came into my chamber, I was thinking with myself, what numbers of souls there are now in the world, in my condition at this very time, surpriz'd with a summons to the other world; some taken from their *shops* and *farms*, others from their *sports* and *pleasures*, these at *suits at law*, those at *gaming-tables*, and all seiz'd at an hour when they thought nothing of it; frightened at the approach of death, confounded at the vanity of all their labours, designs, and projects, astonish'd at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort: Their consciences flying in their faces, bringing all their sins to their remembrance, tormenting them with the sight of the angry Judge, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quench'd, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

OH my friends! bless God that you are not of this number, that you have time and strength to employ yourselves in such works of piety, as may bring you peace at the last.

AND take this along with you, that there is nothing but a life of great piety, or a death of great stupidity, that can keep off these apprehensions.

HAD I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for one year more, that I might present unto God one year of such devotion and good works, as I never before so much as intended.

YOU perhaps, when you consider that I have liv'd free from *vice* and *debauchery*, and in the communion of the Church,

wonder

wonder to see me so full of remorse and self-condemnation at the approach of death.

BUT alas! what a poor thing is it, to have liv'd only free from *murder, theft and adultery*, which is all that I can say for my self.

YOU know indeed, that I have never been reckon'd a *foe*, but you are at the same time witnesses, and have been frequent companions of my *intemperance, sensuality, and great indulgence*. And if I am now going to a judgment, where nothing will be rewarded but *good works*, I may well be concern'd, that tho' I am no *foe*, yet I have no *Christian sobriety* to plead for me.

IT is true, I have liv'd in the communion of the Church and generally frequented its worship and service on *Sundays*, when I was neither too *idle*, or not otherwise dispos'd of by my *business and pleasures*. But then my conformity to the publick worship has been rather a thing of course, than any real intention of doing that, which the service of the Church supposes; had it not been so, I had been oftner at Church, more devout when there, and more fearful of ever neglecting it.

BUT the thing that now surprizes me above all wonders, is this, that I never had so much as a *general intention* of living up to the piety of the Gospel. This never so much as enter'd into my heart. I never once in my life consider'd whether I was living as the laws of Religion direct, or whether my way of life was such, as would procure me the mercy of God at this hour.

AND can it be thought, that I have kept the Gospel terms of salvation, without ever so much as *intending* in any serious deliberate manner either to know them, or keep them? Can it be thought, that I have pleas'd God with such a life as he requires, tho' I have liv'd without ever considering, what he requires, or how much I have perform'd? How easy a thing would salvation be, if it could fall into my careless hands, who have never had so much serious thoughts about it, as about any one common bargain that I have made?

IN the business of life I have used prudence and reflection, I have been glad to converse with men of experience and judgment, to find out the reasons why some fail, and others succeed in any business. I have taken no step in trade but with great care and caution, considering every advantage or danger that attended it. I have always had my eye upon the main end of business, and have study'd all the ways and means of being a gainer by all that I undertook.

BUT what is the reason that I have brought none of these tem-
pers to Religion? What is the reason that I, who have so often
talk'd of the necessity of *rules and methods*, and *diligence* in worldly
business, have all this while never once thought of any rules, or
methods,

methods, or managements, to carry me on in a life of piety?

Do you think any thing can astonish, and confound a dying man like this? What pain do you think a man must feel, when his conscience lays all this folly to his charge, when it shall shew him how regular, exact, wise he has been in small matters, that are passed away like a dream, and how stupid and senseless he has liv'd without any reflection, without any rules, in things of such eternal moment, as no heart can sufficiently conceive them.

HAD I only my *frailties* and *imperfections* to lament at this time, I should lye here humbly trusting in the mercies of God. But alas! how can I call a general disregard, and a thorough neglect of all religious improvement, a *frailty* or *imperfection*; when it was as much in my power to have been exact, and careful, and diligent in a course of piety, as in the business of my trade.

I COULD have call'd in as many helps, have practis'd as many rules, and been taught as many certain methods of holy living, as of thriving in my shop, had I but so *intended* and *desir'd* it.

OH my friends! a careless life, unconcern'd and unattentive to the duties of Religion, is so without all excuse, so unworthy of the mercy of God, such a shame to the sense and reason of our minds, that I can hardly conceive a greater punishment, than for a man to be thrown into the state that I am in, to reflect upon it.

Penitens was here going on, but had his mouth stopp'd by a *convulsion*, which never suffer'd him to speak any more. He lay convuls'd about twelve hours, and then gave up the ghost.

Now if every reader would imagine this *Penitens* to have been some particular acquaintance or relation of his, and fancy that he saw and heard all that is here describ'd, that he stood by his bed-side when his poor friend lay in such distress and agony, lamenting the folly of his past life, it would in all probability teach him such wisdom as never enter'd into his heart before. If to this, he should consider, how often he himself might have been surpris'd in the same state of negligence, and made an example to the rest of the world, this double reflection, both upon the distress of his friend, and the goodness of that God, who had preserv'd him from it, would in all likelihood soften his heart into holy tempers, and make him turn the remainder of his life into a regular course of piety.

THIS therefore being so useful a meditation, I shall here leave the reader, as, I hope, seriously engag'd in it.

F I N I S.